

**ZANE BOYD**

**A SELECTION OF EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE, LETTERS &  
PUBLISHED ARTICLES**

*As presented to the Memorial gathering honouring  
his life, in Toronto, November 24, 2013*

**PART 4 correspondence from Zane Boyd**

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Will Brant (pseudonym), Jan.12, 2004

**Re: Petras's latest article in last CD (*Canadian Dimension* –ed.) /**

Dear Comrades,

First, I will be forwarding you all pronto from my other email address a letter I sent to CD regarding their having published excerpts from a letter of mine in their last issue—notably not on the Cuba question.

Second, and the reason for this email, I want to bring to your attention and raise for discussion an article by James Petras in CD's latest November-December issue entitled "Is the American Empire in Decline?" This article is not available on CD's website edition of their last issue. JD lent me his copy of this issue of CD the other day and what I'll do is make available photocopies of the article to each of you as well as to Lois at Thursday's meeting.

Petras's article requires a critical review and, in my opinion, a critical response. To my mind, his article is a reiteration of a thesis that we heard back in the sixties, namely, that significant class struggle, let alone revolutionary struggle, is precluded for the indefinite future within the advanced capitalist world, above all within "the empire", i.e., the United States; that significant class or revolutionary struggle will of necessity be confined to the neo-colonial world and especially Latin America; and finally that, as Petras says in his concluding paragraph, "only with external defeats will internal dissent or opposition emerge [within the U.S.], activating the exploited and the poor, particularly the black and Hispanic population. At that point too, rival imperial powers may take advantage of the decline to asser their own imperial interests and dissociate themselves from a weakening empire."

I will, below, transcribe the entire "Conclusion" section of Petras's article up to the last paragraph just quoted, to give you a fuller picture of his thesis.

*"Conclusion*

*"The dynamics of the US empire-building are still in full force even as contradictions deepen and fissures appear. The imperialist state commands the allegiance of its domestic ruling class and substantial sectors of a fragmented, chauvinistic, downwardly mobile population despite growing unease among the public as the Iraqi resistance grows...*

*"Has the US empire "peaked"? Perhaps. But the current imperial projections are for further wars. The promoters [of] US imperial-colonial conquest draw no limits, experience no internal constraints and possess willing accomplices among the other great and lesser powers, most of whom are eager to make amends for their meek dissent over US tactics in the run-up to the Iraqi conquest...*

*"If my evidence and arguments hold, it is clear that imperial rivalries, internal opposition and economic contradiction will not play a decisive role in the "decline of the empire". Mass political-social struggles in the colonized nations and client states are the driving forces calling into question the durability of the empire, its longevity and its successes and losses...*

*"The empire will be defeated from without or it will not be defeated at all. Only with external defeats will internal dissent or opposition emerge, activating the ...." [as above].*

...The first sentence in this final paragraph of Petras states his thesis in a nutshell. To reiterate, haven't we heard this at least once before?

See you at the meeting!

Zane

Date: Thur. 29 Jan 2004

From: Will Brant

**Subject: Imperialism discussion**

Dear Comrades,

Below are some initial impressionistic comments on some of the recent and ongoing discussion/debate by noted Marxist authorities on assessing the current and, in many cases, the entire post-World War II character and evolution of contemporary imperialism.:

My comments are based on the articles in the last (i.e., previous-to the current) issue of *Monthly Review* (New York socialist journal) which Harry (Kopyto) himself reviewed two or three meetings ago-and whose analysis was synopsized in the minutes for that meeting (which I no longer have online, unfortunately). Also, the article in the current MR by duBois, a printout of which I'm attaching to this email. Please DO NOT circulate this printout online to anyone else; I've copied it your (our) own personal convenience only.) Finally, there's the contribution by James Petras in the November-December *Canadian Dimension*, a copy of which I circulated and commented on at the last meeting.

What is clear from a perusal of all these articles is that there is no consensus among the various authors in their attempt to analyze contemporary imperialism both at present and in most cases within the past thirty years or even half-century. In fact, there is widespread disagreement. Some (emphasize) a situation of long-term U.S. hegemony in decline, others much the opposite, i.e., a strengthened U.S. hegemony and even Empire (as some like to put it, with a capital E no less). Samir Amin posits a neo-Hitlerite character to U.S. hegemony. Some emphasize growing inter-imperialist rivalry especially between the U.S. and Europe, others disclaim this, again emphasizing a "new" situation of outright U.S. domination.

In terms of their method of analysis, it would seem that some of these authors "experts" analyze the situation within the "classically" 20th-century Marxist framework of seeing imperialism as a world system. This is the case whether these particular authors agree on whether U.S. capitalism remains hegemonic, weakened or strengthened. Others would seem to abandon this imperialism-as-system approach, adopting what I maintain is a non-Marxist, bourgeois-impressionist concept of "Empire", drawing parallels for instance with the former British empire. There is considerable discussion within some of these articles on the definition and nature of "hegemony" and "empire".

To me, at least initially and without more extensive study of these articles and perhaps others elsewhere (e.g., *New Left Review*) (*Britain*) and in recent books by these same authors and still others, it would seem some of these different analyses reflect differing points of view or perspectives that reflect in many cases their particular personal fields of expertise and study. This is very clearly the case, for instance, with New Left Review editor Peter Gowan's contribution in which he discusses at length the European Union and what for him are its necessary implications. Even more obviously, Petras's emphasis on an unchallenged U.S. Empire out to dominate the "Third World", above all Latin America.

Most importantly, their different analyses prompt, whether explicitly or implicitly, different strategic and tactical perspectives by these various authors for the international class struggle and revolutionary perspectives over the current and coming period. Clearly, if these so-called experts can't agree in their analyses of and conclusions regarding global imperialism, what are the millions of us less-informed revolutionaries and anti-imperialist activists to conclude?

What seems to me evident in all this is that it is next to impossible for Marxists to assess in a complete and fully comprehensive manner the particular nature of contemporary imperialism. In attempting to do so, what we arrive at is different viewpoints and perspectives, none of them offering a complete picture. The reason would seem that there are simply too many important variables going on. Capitalism, after all, remains for the most part an anarchic system.

However, in spite of — or rather, in fact, because of this — we cannot make any firm long-term or even temporary conclusions as to what, where and how the contradictions within this complex, anarchic and unfolding global imperialism will impact the class struggle and revolutionary developments in various parts of the world, even within the United States itself. We have to reject, therefore, the attempt by some theorists to firmly anticipate and locate the locus of class and revolutionary struggle for the whole next period in a particular part of the world or to strategically elevate and exaggerate the relative importance of one locus or a

particular aspect of the struggle against global imperialism (e.g., that against "The Empire within the neo-colonial world") — a continuing popular strategic point of view among much of the revolutionary left. This is particularly important, because there is a definite tendency to downplay — and in some cases (e.g., Petras) a categorical rejection — any perspective of significant class let alone revolutionary struggle within the advanced imperialist nations themselves. My general argument, again, is that the variables and contradictions within the global imperialist system are simply too many and too complex to predict with any certainty or even likelihood (which of) these variables and contradictions will come into play in the near and even distant future.

In any case, I hope to make a more thorough study and write up a more considered assessment of these and other articles and contributions on this strategically fundamental matter over the next while, perhaps including in the process a rebuttal to Petras's article in the next-to-last issue of CD.

(A final little aside about all this: isn't it interesting and indeed telling of the mindset of much of the revolutionary left that some revolutionists can in fact be called counter-revolutionary for openly criticizing repressive measures by the Cuban regime while someone like James Petras, who emphatically rules out revolutionary and even significant class struggle within the imperialist heartland over the entire next period, is considered (1) is possibly merely mistaken, (2) has a viewpoint at least worth considering, (3) is profoundly insightful in his analysis and conclusions, but (4) is not in the least considered to be counter-revolutionary in making such a drastic argument and assertions. Of course, I don't believe anything would in the least be gained by labeling Petras or anyone else making similar arguments "counter-revolutionary". However, the disdain and hyperbolic condemnation to which other socialists are subjected to for their critical viewpoints on a much more limited and, I would say, much less important matter, i.e, the leadership of a single small revolutionary regime, is, as I said, telling.)

See you tonight,

Zane

PS: I'll print this out for tonight's meeting for Lois and anyone who has not had time to read this today.

From: Zane Boyd, Feb. 16, 2004

**Re: No Layton coverage**

Dear Editor:

I don't want to begrudge the *Star* its ongoing love affair with the Liberal Party, despite that party's most recent blatant betrayal of the public trust.

Curiously, your Monday February 16 issue features not only front-page coverage of Prime Minister Paul Martin's fire-eating performance over the weekend. You follow with four more full pages dedicated to what you call "Martin' mission"—which might more appropriately have been titled "Martin's machinations".

Are you in fact, however, still a "news" paper?

After all, amidst all the reams of print you devote to Mr. Martin's redemption from damnation, you choose not to carry a single word, not a paltry paragraph, not even in your GTA section, regarding NDP leader Jack Layton's nomination meeting the previous day for the riding of Toronto Danforth in the upcoming federal election.

This was, after all, a public event of at least a modicum of political merit and interest, which was attended moreover by several hundred persons many of whom had had earlier in the day succeeded in canvassing every household in the riding. Not only did Layton speak at some length, not least regarding the Liberals' feeding frenzy at the public trough. MPs Svend Robinson and Libby Davies also spoke, as did former federal NDP leaders Alexa McDonough and Ed Broadbent as well as Ontario NDP leader Howard Hampton.

In contrast with the *Star's* blackout of Layton's nomination meeting, the *Globe and Mail* carried a half-page report on the event and even the *Toronto Sun* managed to cough up a couple of paragraphs.

I'm afraid that, once again (as this is an all-too-frequent pattern at the *Star*), your political bias has compromised your journalistic integrity and your own mission.

Sincerely yours,  
Zane Boyd

Zane Boyd, April 21, 2004

**Subject: Re: perspectives for revolutionary organization at this time**

Dear Comrades,

The following are thoughts and conclusions that have been germinating for some time now. Perhaps you will interpret them as rationalizations for my own decision not to be further involved in revolutionary organizing at this time. I think they stand consideration on their own, regardless.

It's been my sense for some time now -- at least since the mid-90s after a few years' fallout from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the concomitant dissolution of the Trotskyist movement and of the erosion of Trotskyist/Leninist theory as we've known it among the revolutionary left; and the general unhinging of historical revolutionary organizational tradition and theory - that the entire

and (I still maintain) historically necessary project of forming a revolutionary socialist party in this country as well as internationally has been effectively put on hold for the foreseeable future.

I remain a Marxist, not merely or even mainly because I believe socialism is necessary; and a Leninist, because I believe a disciplined, cohesive revolutionary party will ultimately be required to achieve this end; and, yes, still a Trotskyist, because only by means of socialist measures, as opposed to stage-ism of all varieties, can the world's masses liberate themselves.

For me, though, the essence of Marxism resides in the conviction that the necessary struggle for socialism is born fundamentally, not from this conviction itself, not from belief or ideology, nor from some proselytizing and organizing mission by devoted revolutionaries, but rather from the various and manifold contradictions of capitalism itself — expressed first and foremost in the struggle of the masses themselves that capitalism itself gives rise to.

It is true that, as a result of this by-now longstanding mass struggle, an entire historical experience, continuity and tradition has been built up over the decades and remains with us still. However, for the foreseeable future and for a variety of reasons, that tradition and continuity has now been largely forgotten or, by others, ignored or denied. What's more, it seems, no amount of harping or expounding on that tradition seems to be able to restore it. Rather, the lessons of history that remain with us will unfortunately have to be relearned all over again in the course of the unfolding class struggle itself over the next several years.

In other words, to a considerable degree, we are having to begin all over again, seemingly from scratch. A renewed movement for socialism will of necessity have to arise from the positive and the negative experiences of struggle by the working and oppressed masses themselves engaged in their own particular struggles over the entire next period. No amount of advocacy or advice from revolutionary socialists can preempt or substitute for such a necessary process. In fact, to a considerable degree, we will have to step back for a time and let experience itself take its course. At some point, as mass proletarian struggles arise here and there or possibly as the result of a generalized crisis in the global capitalist system, a new generation of working class leaders and significant numbers of rank and file workers will themselves turn once again to Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism, based on their own experiences, many of them necessarily negative and frustrating.

In light of this conclusion, I don't feel it any longer necessary that I continue to be involved in the Forward Group. This is not to say that there is not some merit in revolutionary socialist Trotskyists sharing views and exchanging experiences over the next entire period. But the prospect of sustaining some sort of organizational Trotskyist nucleus at this point seems to me futile and a waste of my, these days, flagging energy.

I have come to the conclusion that only by means of some serious and unpredictable economic and/or profound political and social crisis will anything in the nature of a Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist project ever be born and eventually come to fruition. In the meantime, the struggle will necessarily have to unfold, evolve and learn for itself on its own.

For these reasons, I am resigning from active membership in the Forward Group and, instead, be would rather be considered a sympathizer who remains in general agreement with the Group's overall historical viewpoint and aims.

Comradely,  
Zane

To: Letters to the (Toronto daily) *Star*  
Re: "Jack Layton's 'low blow'"

Zane Boyd, May 29, 2004

### **Re NDP's criticism low blow, PM says August 28.**

The recent barrage of criticism and condemnation of NDP leader Jack Layton from across the political spectrum and throughout the media is clearly a case of shooting the messenger.

Instead of being hailed for telling the blunt and honest truth about the harsh realities of Prime Minister Paul Martin's budgetary policies as former finance minister, Layton himself is being held up for ridicule.

Politicians — and the electorate that vote them into office — have to realize that there are very real life-and-death consequences to the seemingly benign measures that governments take. People not only suffer, but actually die as a result of lowering taxes and cutting back on social expenditures. That's simple fact.

This is as true at the provincial level as at the federal. For instance, the recent decision by the Ontario McGuinty government to eliminate health coverage for physiotherapy will inevitably result in the deaths of several seniors and other Ontario citizens over the next few years. Physiotherapists and doctors have said as much in roundly condemning this single discretionary measure.

It is particularly galling to hear Prime Minister Paul Martin condemn Layton's remarks as the kind of thing that sours young people against the electoral process.

The truth is, young people — and a good many older ones like myself — are put off electoral politics not by the bold truth and by those who refuse to play the gentlemanly political game. They are alienated by opportunists like Martin and McGuinty who with straight faces make all sorts of noble promises at election time, but who once in office enact policies that with the stroke of a pen zap the livelihood and lives of millions.

Unfortunately, this recurring farce is seen to be as true of the NDP as the Liberals and Tories. Layton's credibility is in doubt among the youth non-vote not for boldly telling the truth about Paul Martin's policies as former finance minister. The doubt rests in whether Layton would

actually have the courage and resolve to actually carry out his bold anti-corporate policies, given the rather sorry record of NDP governments to date on that score.

Yours sincerely,  
Zane Boyd

From: Zane Boyd, June 19/04,  
**My alleged story**  
Dear Gord, John and Diane,

The following is the shtick I've settled on in looking for a new place. Sorry for the confusion, but the landlady at my first viewing caught me unprepared and, after further consideration, I've decided it's best to simplify things by reducing the number of places I'd lived at and make my story more "credible".

In future applications, I'm not going to even say that I was living up in Haliburton but was rather away-travelling for a year following Kim's death (Mexico, mainly). The problem is that my most recent landlord up in Haliburton was a public housing company and that could identify me as someone on government assistance and therefore blow my cover. So, I'm no longer saying (except for this first landlady named Diane that I saw Friday and from whom you may yet get a call since she's still reviewing my application) that I lived up in Haliburton for 15 months. Nevertheless, following my return from Mexico late last spring I did some time in Haliburton last summer (2003) where I took a couple of courses in Expressive Arts Therapy. After that I travelled west to visit friends and relatives.

Anyway, the overall story goes:

I'm looking for a place now because I'm separating from my "girlfriend" Ingrid Philipp with whom I've been living since returning to Toronto at the end of November 2003 after a 15 months' absence. I'm therefore now looking for a place a.s.a.p. since, for the time being, I'm forced to stay with various family and friends. (All of this is essentially true.)

Prior to leaving Toronto at the end of August 2002 following my brother's death (this being the reason for my doing so), I had worked for eighteen years (since 1984) freelancing as an editor and graphics designer consultant. Each of you can say that in years past you'd occasionally referred the odd person to me for my work. (Gord, you can say that I originally met you while I we worked together in 1971 at Consolidated Computer where I was an editor. Diane, you can say that we've simply been friends and acquaintances for over thirty years.)

As for my living arrangements during this entire period, I had rented an apartment in a house belonging to one Lorna Clark (I'm not bothering to say she's my cousin) at 99 Durie Street from the summer of 1994 through August 2002 when I left the city. Before that I had shared a house with my common-law partner at the time for several years since the mid-80s. (I don't think anyone would bother going back that far.)



From 1978 to 1984 I worked for you, John, at Action Print and Graphics first as a typesetter then doing layout and design as well. (I actually still have a former cooked-up letter of reference from you when I was looking for work back in the 1980s!) Prior to that I managed a bookstore, Forward Books, for four years. (This I also used on a cooked-up resume back in the 1980s and have a letter of reference regarding this from one Ross Dowson!)

During the 1990s I began taking part-time courses at York U. mainly in music, something I'd become re-interested in. (This, again, is true.) On my return to Toronto recently — and seeking a complete career change as a result of Kim's death and my time away, I've decided to go back to York to pursue a degree in music and psychology. My interest is primarily music (as well as dance/movement) as a form of therapy. I'm able to do this, my former savings now exhausted, on several thousand dollars inherited from my brother's estate via my sister. Still, I expect I'll have to occasionally work part-time as needed to stretch out my funds. It's because of my going back to school that I'm trying to restrict my expenses and it is for that reason that I'm seeking such cheap digs (a basement apartment in the \$600 per month range).

...Anyway, that's the spiel. Of course, none of you has to go into any of this. It's mainly so that you have some backdrop for anything you might say about me.

Please feel free to respond — or call me at my dad's at 416-777-0763 — if you have any comments or suggestions.

And thanks for your help.  
Zane

**Subject: Little Addendum re My Alleged Story**

Dear John and Diane,

In responding to Gord on another matter, but who had meanwhile conveyed that, okay, he's got my "story" straight, I responded with the following note:

Anyway, to add to my little drama — hey, I figure I might as well go all out and make it a real soaper! -- the ex-common-law spouse I had owned a house with from the 1985 to 1994 (at 100 Oakmount Avenue near High Park) was named Jennifer O'Neal who died of breast cancer in 1993 at age 44 and with whom I'd been together for about twelve years and who I met while I was still working for John D. back in 1981.

(Maybe I should take up writing fiction, what do you think?)

Zane

Date: Sat, 10 July 2004

From: Zane Boyd

**Subject: Re: Canadian federal election: what happened and what's next**

Dear Gord,

I didn't read all of this contribution by Barry. Nor all of the long article by Murray Dobbin you forwarded earlier. I'd have to print them out to do so. However, I did give them both a cursory glance.

What seems missing in any analysis I've yet seen on the election is the fact that, in a number of ridings across the country, strategic voting against the Conservatives didn't hurt the Conservatives in favour of the Liberals, but rather resulted in the defeat of the NDP candidates in these ridings. This was true, I think, in Sid Ryan's Oshawa riding where he came second to the Conservative candidate; it also appears to have been the case in Kenora, as well as in Regina and Saskatoon, and finally possibly in half a dozen B.C. ridings where the same scenario was played out, i.e., the NDP candidate coming second to the Tory winner.

If anything demonstrates the bankruptcy of strategic voting, this election has to be it. This is quite apart from the fact that the entire Conservative "threat" was overplayed by the media and the pollsters, which of course only played into the hands of not only the Liberals but also the Conservatives at the expense of the NDP. Murray Dobbin himself points to this exaggerated threat later in his article, although he starts off by breathing a huge sigh of relief at the fact the Conservatives didn't win. Given that their vote was less than the combined vote of the Conservatives and Alliance in the last election, the "threat" turned out to be a red (or blue) herring.

Anyway, just some of my own reflections on the results of the election.

Zane